



# Preparing for the Employment Rights Bill 2026: Family Leave Policies

## An HR:4UK Employer Readiness Checklist

The Employment Rights Bill 2026 introduces major family-friendly reforms that strengthen protection for pregnant employees, create new day-one rights for paternity and parental leave, and extend bereavement entitlements.

While most changes will take effect in 2026 and 2027, preparing early will ensure your policies, procedures and managers are ready — keeping your business compliant, fair, and people-focused.

Use this checklist to review your organisation's readiness.

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### 1. Review and Update Family Leave Policies

- Have you reviewed all relevant policies — maternity, paternity, parental, adoption and bereavement leave?
- Have you **removed service length requirements** (for example, the 26-week rule for paternity leave and one year for parental leave)?
- Have you **updated your handbook wording** to reflect new day-one rights for family leave?
- Have you included **neonatal care leave** and considered adding **miscarriage leave** ahead of the legal requirement?
- Are your policies written in plain, accessible language and applied consistently across your business?

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### 2. Strengthen Dismissal and Redundancy Procedures

- Have you updated your internal dismissal protocols to reflect the new protections for pregnant employees and new parents?
- Do you have a formal HR or legal escalation process in place for any potential dismissal involving someone who is pregnant or within six months of returning from family leave?
- Have you reminded managers that dismissing someone during these protected periods is high-risk and likely unlawful except in extreme cases (e.g. gross misconduct or genuine redundancy)?
- Are your redundancy policies consistent with current law on priority for suitable alternative employment?

### 3. Refresh Manager Training and Awareness

- Have all managers received up-to-date training on the new **day-one employment rights** under the Employment Rights Bill 2026?
  - Do managers understand that **paternity and parental leave apply from day one** of employment?
  - Are managers confident handling pregnancy announcements, parental leave requests, and bereavement conversations sensitively?
  - Are line managers aware of the **additional dismissal protections** for employees returning from family leave?
  - Have you scheduled **refresher training** to prepare managers before the reforms take effect?
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### 4. Plan for Absence Cover and Workforce Management

- Have you reviewed how your business will manage **short-notice absences** related to new leave entitlements?
  - Do you have contingency plans in place to cover **paternity, parental, neonatal or bereavement leave**?
  - Have you cross-trained staff or created flexible working arrangements to minimise disruption?
  - Are your policies clear on how temporary cover and workload redistribution will be handled fairly?
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### 5. Communicate Proactively with Employees

- Do you have a communication plan to explain the **upcoming family leave changes** to staff?
  - When an employee announces a pregnancy or family event, do you provide clear reassurance about their new **protections and rights**?
  - Are employees encouraged to discuss their needs early so you can plan support and cover effectively?
  - Have you updated your onboarding and induction materials to include the new entitlements?
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### 6. Prepare for Policy Roll-Out and Internal Updates

- Have you planned how you'll share policy updates with staff (e.g. briefings or email summaries)?
  - Have you updated all internal templates, forms and HR systems (such as leave request forms) to reflect the new entitlements?
  - Are your line managers confident explaining these changes consistently?
  - Have you considered running an **HR surgery or Q&A session** for employees to raise questions about the reforms?
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## 7. Monitor Further Developments

- Are you tracking updates on the **autumn 2025 Government consultations** regarding dismissal protection and bereavement leave details?
- Do you have a plan to review policies again once final regulations are published?
- Are you subscribed to **HR:4UK legal and compliance updates** to stay informed about further Employment Rights Bill developments?



**Tip:** Supporting employees through key life events isn't just about compliance - it's about creating a workplace that people trust and value. By taking early action, businesses can demonstrate that they are forward-thinking, fair, and family-friendly employers.

### Need Help?

Our HR experts can help you review your family leave policies, update documentation, and deliver manager training, HR Surgeries or Q&A's ahead of the Employment Rights Bill 2026.



**Contact HR:4UK today** to stay ahead of the changes and protect your business.



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